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Item 3 (g) of the provisional agenda*
Economic statistics: other economic statistics (city groups on economic statistics and Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics)

Report of city groups

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Report of the Expert Group on Intangibles

1. The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the report of the Expert Group on Intangibles, which is contained in the annex. The report is transmitted to the Commission in accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirtieth session.[1]

Action to be taken by the Commission

2. The Commission is invited to discuss whether the mandate of the Expert Group is focused and whether its objectives are clear and attainable. The Commission may also wish to comment on the proposals for future work.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 4* (E/1999/24), chap. I.B.

* E/CN.3/2000/1.

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Annex

Report of the Expert Group on Intangibles

Intangible assets

The System of National Accounts, 1993, suggests that intangible assets be included alongside tangible assets, but because this is a new field for most national accountants more specific guidance of the type found in a handbook would be helpful. Ongoing work by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) related to the Frascati family of manuals on research and development, other intangibles (training and human resources, organizational change etc.) and new science and technology indicators (estimation of the value of innovation etc.) is highly relevant. The OECD Directorate for Science, Technology and Industry has recently made available a set of 15 papers and a detailed bibliography that summarizes the evolution of the various strands of such work over several years on a web site for general access at:

http://www.oecd.org/dsti/sti/industry/indcomp/prod/intang.htm

The Directorate, in conjunction with the Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs and in cooperation with the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Nordic Industrial Fund, organized an international symposium on the theme "Measuring and reporting intellectual capital: experience, issues and prospects", held at Amsterdam from 9 to 11 June 1999. The papers of the meeting and its results are available at:

http://www.oecd.org//dsti/sti/industry/indcomp/act/ams-conf/symposium-old.htm

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Information economy

The development of appropriate indicators and the availability of statistics are necessary to understand the mechanisms, trends and implications of the information society and electronic commerce. The OECD Working Party on Indicators for the Information Society, after developing an OECD activity-based definition of the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, is currently collecting internationally comparable ICT supply data and extending the ICT sector definition to a commodity-based one. The group is also working on a definition of the content sector and developing model surveys for the use of ICTs.

Particularly challenging issues are being faced in the area of electronic commerce, where reliable and internationally comparable statistics that measure levels, growth and composition are lacking, as is a consistent definition of electronic commerce. To initiate work on defining and measuring electronic commerce is one of the seven objectives of the OECD e-commerce action plan endorsed by ministers at a conference held at Ottawa in October 1998. Following an OECD workshop on 21 April 1999, which brought together the expertise of business, policy makers, researchers and statisticians to discuss issues of definition and measurement of e-commerce, the Working Party decided at its April 1999 meeting to create an expert group on defining and measuring e-commerce. Fourteen countries and the Statistical Office of the European Communities are participating in the expert group, and Singapore is participating as an observer. The expert group is working with policy makers, businesses and research institutes to develop a framework for measurement priorities for electronic commerce. Initial building blocks of its multifaceted work are (a) the development of a set of e-commerce definitions for the purpose of statistical measurement across countries, (b) the translation of policy needs into a set of comparable e-commerce indicators and (c) the development of concrete proposals to use and adapt existing statistical instruments to collect data and develop such indicators.

A status report on the activities of the expert group was prepared for a forum on electronic

commerce held in Paris in October 1999. The report can be downloaded from:

http://www.oecd.org/dsti/sti/it/ec/act/paris_ec/paris-ec_docs_1.htm

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